



USAID | MACEDONIA
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PRESS RELEASE

U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) brings to an end the project that made Macedonia the first wireless country in the world

Over the past three years, USAID's Macedonia Connects project (MK Connects) brought free broadband internet to nearly 550 schools throughout the country, made internet affordable to local businesses and individuals, and increased the number of internet users nationwide.

"Macedonia Connects has revolutionized life in Macedonia by helping it to become the first wireless country in the world, and by creating competition that has drastically reduced the price of internet access," said U.S. Ambassador Gillian Milovanovic.

Through MK Connects, free internet access was provided to some Macedonian municipalities, coinciding with the start of the decentralization process. Municipalities have leveraged this access and developed sophisticated websites and portals where citizens can get updated information on municipal services. The improvement in citizen services is building increased popular support for the decentralization process, and brings government closer to the people. This represents world class good governance, delivered at the local level.

In addition to internet access, teachers and students received valuable tools for improving learning and teaching practices through the first School Web Portal in Macedonia (www.schools.edu.mk). This web portal allows students, teachers and parents to access e-mail, exchange educational materials, and host free web pages for their schools. Over a thousand school teachers received free training in web design.

With the closure of MK Connects, USAID's free internet to schools will end on December 31, 2007. Ambassador Milovanovic stated, "One key item the Government must plan for is the continuation of internet connectivity for the schools. This is crucial because without internet connectivity, the investment both our governments have made in technology cannot achieve the results we desire."

NOTE TO EDITORS:

The American people, through USAID, have invested nearly \$500 million in Macedonia since 1993. More than 20 projects worth \$25 million a year are currently being implemented. They include initiatives to accelerate economic growth, develop democratic institutions, and educate citizens for a modern economy. USAID provides economic and humanitarian assistance in more than 100 countries. For more information please visit <http://macedonia.usaid.gov>.